

MINUTES FOR JULY 9, 2009
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: Erwin Mack, Chair; Arthur Holmes, MCDOT; Alyce Ortuzar; Ken Hartman, BCC Regional Service Center; James D'Andrea, MCPS; Jack Strausman; Alan Migdall; Steve Friedman, Bicycle Advocate; John Britton, Municipal League; Justin Clark, MNCPPC; Ben Stutz for Councilmember Valerie Ervin

Members Absent: Bill Bronrott Vice-Chair; Lt. Ronald Smith, MCPD; Doris Depaz, CASA de Maryland; John Howley; Colleen Mitchell, Peter Moe, MSHA, MHSO

County Staff: Tom Pogue, Community Outreach, MCDOT; Jeff Dunkel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, MCDOT; Larry McGoogin, Safe Routes To School Coordinator, MCDOT; Fred Lees, Traffic Engineering and Operations, MCDOT; Bill Selby, Directors Office, MCDOT; Bruce Johnston, Transportation Engineering, MCDOT; Richard Earp, Transportation Engineering, Sidewalk Program, MCDOT; Richard Hoyer, Councilmember Trachtenberg, DTS; Jeff Zyontz, Council Legislative Analyst

Guests: Opper Chiweshe Mutetwa, Student; Cindy Buddington, Chairwoman of the Commission for People with Disabilities

1. Committee Business:

- a. Review Minutes from May Meeting – Approval/Changes
- b. Departure of Chuck Kines; Introduce Justin Clarke
- c. Departure of Lt. Ron Smith; Introduce Lt. Jim Humphries
- d. Membership: Reappointments and Interviews for New Members
- e. Plans for Preparing Annual Report – Set up Subcommittee
- f. Set up subcommittee/task force Speed Humps
- g. Subcommittee Reports
 - Bicycle Access and Safety
 - Innovative Pedestrians Signal Engineering

2. Briefing on the MCDOT Sidewalks Program

3. Silver Spring Library – Handicapped Parking Access Bridge

- a. Leggett letter requesting meeting with Disabilities Commission
- b. Testimony at June 30 County Council session
- c. Future actions or position of the PTSAC?

4. Briefing on June 24 Speed Camera Symposium

5. CountyStat Review – June 16

7. New Business/Committee Comments

- a. Draft of Annual Report for September Meeting
- b. Meeting in November – Invite Chiefs of Police
- c. Other items?
- d. Next Meeting Date: Sept. 3, 2009 ? Should we reschedule?

8. Adjourn

Handouts:

Agenda
May Minutes
PTSAC Mission Statement and Work Program – Revised Language
Pedestrian Safety Action Plan – Revised/Final
Letter from County Executive on Silver Spring Library
PTSAC Email on Silver Spring Pedestrian Bridge Position (February)
CountyStat Review Package – June 16, 2009

Chairman Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

1.) Committee Business: Jeff discussed the May minutes. A lot of action items in the minutes because of all the subcommittees established. Motion to accept moved; Steve Friedman cited the misspelling of his name on page 2 and other

places. Corrections to be made. Minutes approved unanimously.

Departure of Chuck Kines; Introduced his replacement, Justin Clarke. Kines took a job working for the Parks Department on trail development. Clarke is on a list of people submitted by the County Executive to the County Council for approval. These recommendations are replacements and reappointments so there were no interviews. All replacements and reappointments must still be approved by County. Other recommended reappointments were Colleen Mitchell, Steve Friedman, Art Holmes, and John Britton.

Another change on the committee is the departure of Lt. Ron Smith. Smith is being replaced by Lt. James Humphries – Smith will now be working in MCPD Special Ops. Though Humphries is new to Traffic, he is a quick study. He couldn't make it tonight due to his previous scheduled vacation. He should be at the September meeting.

Interviews for New Members: Dunckel says we have one confirmed vacancy (from John Howley resigning) and will replace him – advertisements have been placed – applications have been received – we are interested in diversity, working with County Executive's Community Liaison Office to attract applications from various groups. Deadline for applications has now been extended to Aug 7th. Interviews will be conducted after that.

Plans for Preparing Annual Report – Need to set up a Subcommittee to prepare the plan – Peter Moe reminded the committee that in lieu of a report for 2008, the committee was to compile minutes from 2008 and do an introduction letter as to why we don't have a report for this year. The subcommittee needs to put together a report for this November; there needs to be a group to assemble and help put together a report. Up to that subcommittee on what they want to say to Mr. Leggett. Goal to have 3 members – James d'Andrea, Ken Hartman, volunteered. Colleen Mitchell will be asked if she will chair the Annual Report Subcommittee.

Mack suggested the PTSAC set up a Subcommittee/task force to address the upcoming issue of Speed Humps/Bumps – in meeting packet is an editorial from the Washington Post addressing the issue: "bump in the road for speed humps." Mack asked for the committee's interest in being apart of this subcommittee. Mack pointed out that the issue does have County-wide implications. Friedman pointed out that, as a cyclist he does not have a problem with humps. However, as member of BCC Rescue Squad, and being an ambulance driver – that is where he has an issue – speed humps can slow down the response on getting an ill patient to the hospital. As a resident, Friedman has concern at how some municipalities circumvent the process. One small township has added a combo of rumble strips and 17 speed humps. This is overkill. Friedman offered to serve on the task force.

Mack requested that a subcommittee study the issue and identify whether there is a role for the PTSAC - - do we want to prepare a report to the County Council? Alan Migdall also offered to be part of this subcommittee too. There is a difference between humps and bumps: bumps are used in parking lots, humps are used in roadways (less severe than bumps). John Britton thought he could be of assistance given his familiarity with other municipal jurisdictions. John Britton agreed to chair the subcommittee. Timeframe for a report: 4-6 months. Peter Moe asked if the subcommittee's charge was to look at the approval process for speed humps or to look at the design issues for speed humps. Mack stated "it's up to the committee" – they can say the process/design is fine or they can make recommendations. Come back in a month with a scope for the subcommittee - - then they can proceed.

Subcommittee Reports on Bicycle Access and Safety: Chairs: Friedman/Moe –Steve Friedman provided an interim report. We formed and came up with a name 'bicycle access and safety subcommittee' (BASS). Our mission is to identify county-wide issues where there are either regulations or other barriers effecting the access and safety for bicyclists. It was formed because we were asked to weigh in on certain intersections and specific issues. One is BRAC realignment for Wisconsin – SHA conducting study to look at current plan and see if there can be improvements. MDDOT is looking at bike and pedestrian access on a separate track. Options include deep to shallow tunnel. They look at bike access before and after plans are implemented, and the quality of bike service - - whether it gets better or worse.

Mack asked the subcommittees to please notify Roselle Paquette of meeting dates and locations so she can communicate it to the committee for their participation. Since we are meeting every other month please provide status reports; the big report will come to the PTSAC meeting at the end.

Jeff Dunckel announced that Steve Friedman had received an award for being "Commuter of the Year." This was given him on Bike to Work Day last May.

Mack asked about the status of the “Drive Safe” video – Dunckel reported it was about to be issued to the public. Various people were interviewed on pedestrian accidents, including Erwin Mack.

Innovative Pedestrians Signal Engineering Subcommittee: Chair -Alan Migdall. Migdall reported the status. The purpose of the subcommittee is to deal with issues of integrating better design into pedestrian signal facilities – adjusting timing, function etc. Migdall collected information on innovative signaling. The first order of business was to meet with Emil Wolanin to get a briefing on what the experts know about the current technology to figure out where we can go from here. This will be scheduled later this in July. Britton reported that Rockville is experimenting with a Strobe Light Pedestrian crossing - a new innovative item - you push button and it speaks to you in English and Spanish – strobe lights bring attention to the pedestrian sign – one is located on Maryland Avenue at City Hall and the COB and another is on Edmonston Drive behind Wintergreen Plaza.

2.) Briefing on the MCDOT Sidewalks Program: Bruce Johnston/Rick Earp – Earp is the program manager for the Annual Sidewalk Program. You can download and view his brochure on the MCDOT website. Earp explained the recent increase in funding to \$2.35 million to spend this year. This is an annually funded program, and is expect to continue into future years. One program measure is how effectively we spend our money – our annual sidewalk program has been very successful for last 15+ years. Earp requested the committee’s help – as they prepare to spend this additional money they are looking at obstacles that impede the construction of sidewalks where they are needed. One impediment is the time it takes to go through the public hearing process - - even if there is no community concern about the sidewalk. MCDOT is considering asking the Council to change the code to delete this requirement for hearing process for all new sidewalks – we are hoping your support can help us to require a public hearing only when there is opposition or other sensitive criteria – then we might be able to build some sidewalks without a hearing, greatly expediting the process. Earp passed out his brochure describing the program.

Because MCDOT does not have an inventory of where there are sidewalks and where they are needed, they can only respond to requests from citizens for new sidewalks. MCDOT has a back log of requested sidewalks; Earp’s Staff goes out and does a preliminary site investigation and follows program guidelines on whether sidewalks can be built (see items in brochure handout). MCDOT seeks community feedback and public support for the requested sidewalks. They mail letter to affected property owners. They often give MCDOT their concerns about the construction. MCDOT also notifies home owner associations. Then MCDOT conducts public hearing; it should only take 2 months - - it often takes longer. Need to give 30-day notice prior to hearing, etc., keep the record open for 2 weeks for those who are not able to attend the hearing. Then if approved by the hearing officer, construction is scheduled, the site is posted, utilities and pavement marking are painted and so on. Some property owners feel invaded due to taking away a part of the land they thought was theirs, even if it is actually public right of way – so there often opposition from immediate property owners. The criterion MCDOT considers is most important; they consider whether the sidewalk demonstrates a significant benefit to public. If so, it we raises to a top priority sidewalk to construct. The brochure handout explains what MCDOT considers in evaluating sidewalk locations. Public support is very important to the process. If MCDOT gets a letter from a school, or a community association, etc., this helps demonstrate support for the sidewalk and also indicates that it will benefit a larger population. Earp went over major challenges to building sidewalks and discussed the public hearing requirements. MCDOT will be doubling the number of sidewalks constructed next year because of the extra funding. We are thinking about asking Council to consider change to law to say if you have a certain amount of support from a community a hearing is not required. MCDOT’s accomplishments – completed 92 sidewalk projects which equal over 23 miles of new sidewalk.

Please visit the MCDOT new website for Transportation Engineering – Sidewalks Program. It is a work in progress. You can submit questions and requests for projects can be submitted via this web site, as well as review status of current projects.

Much discussion about the sidewalk program ensued.

Mack asked about supporting or advocating for an amendment to the program for changes in the hearing process or additional funding needed. Earp said he originally had a proposal to do a countywide inventory of the sidewalks - it was \$800,000 - but then you need staff to manage this and maintain it. Earp emphasized that MCDOT is asking the PTSAC for support of the sidewalks program..

3.) Silver Spring Library – Handicapped Parking Access Bridge: Erwin summarized the history of the project – PTSAC was asked to come up with recommendation in 4 days on whether there should be a pedestrian bridge installed at the Silver

Spring Library. The committee found one person who could begin to help prepare a position statement - - Colleen Mitchell who did a report that was sent to the committee via email. The committee's recommendation was not to have a bridge. We did say there needed to be more concern with the pedestrians and access for those with disabilities at the ground/street level. Mack stated that this then came back to us; apparently we do have some influence. The committee's request was to do more on the ground level and then we would consider whether we would support the bridge - after much discussion, the committee decided we weren't prepared to support the bridge.

The committee was asked to again testify to the Council at the end of June - - Mack told them at that session that the committee can't reconsider this matter until the committee meets again in July. People with disabilities testified at this hearing. New language appeared in the County proposal for the library: now it is a handicap access bridge instead of a pedestrian bridge. At the County Council there were 8 presentations/observations, and of those testifying, there was a mix saying NO and saying YES. The PTSAC's position has been no bridge. We were asked by the County Executive to meet with folks from the Commission for People with Disabilities and to reconsider our position. Colleen wasn't available tonight but took a look at the Committee's position and Colleen re-wrote it. This has been emailed to the Committee prior to this evening's meeting. Colleen stated the bridge should be used as last resort. Mack asked the committee if it was willing to reconsider the action in January that we submitted? Ben Stutz explained that the issue on the table was whether to amend the Silver Spring Redevelopment Plan to allow for a Bridge over Wayne Avenue. Stutz explained that the redevelopment plan was drafted to prohibit bridges in downtown Silver Spring, to create Silver Spring in a way that was going to be a new smart look that was more pedestrians friendly in the downtown area and on the streets. This was considered "smart growth." Pedestrian Bridges have been used in other locations without success. If the Council elects to amend the plan for this one bridge, there is concern you could have private developers coming in asking for bridges all over the downtown area. Stutz pointed out that if this bridge is allowed, the Council would be hard pressed to say no to others. A precedent could be set to have many pedestrian bridges in downtown Silver Spring.

Cindy Buddington, Chairwoman of the Commission on People with Disabilities, was asked to speak with the PTSAC on their Commission's perspective of the bridge. Buddington explained that the Disabilities Commission supported building the access bridge for the library so that a shorter distance to the entrance from where handicapped people would park could be provided. She stated that people with disabilities needed this bridge.

Jeff Dunckel handed out architectural renderings provided to him by the Department of General Services, and described the distances the different options for access would provide. In reviewing these, Ben Stutz pointed out that the distances cited in the options were incorrect - - that there was in fact an elevator at the southeast corner of the parking garage. If the handicapped parking was provided in the lowest level of the garage, in the southeast corner, with the elevator, the distance to the library would be comparable to the pedestrian bridge option. Others familiar with the Wayne Avenue Garage agreed this would be a better option and should be considered.

The Committee voted not to change its position, and to maintain their opposition to a pedestrian/handicapped access bridge to the Silver Spring Library.

4.) Briefing on June 24 Speed Camera Symposium: As time was running out, Alan Migdall provided a very brief summation of the MCPD Speed Camera Symposium.

5.) CountyStat Review – June 16: Jeff Dunckel distributed the presentation used in the CountyStat review.

6.) New Business/Committee Comments:

Draft of Annual Report for September Meeting
Meeting in November – Invite Chiefs of Police
Other items?

Next Meeting Date: Sept. 3, 2009. The committee voted to keep the date of September 3 for the next meeting

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.